

NEVADA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

The Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Nevada County. NCTC coordinates state and federal transportation programs for Nevada County, the City of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and the Town of Truckee.

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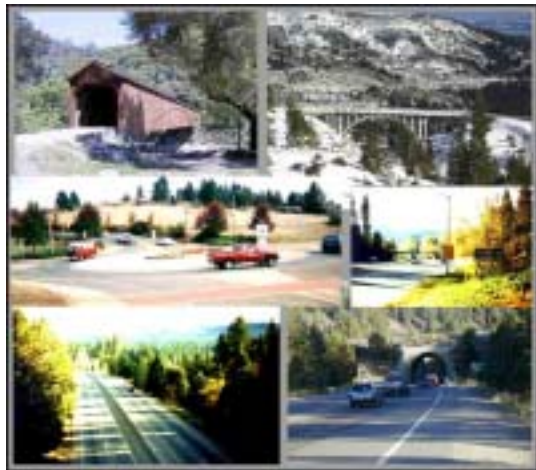
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Nevada County Transportation Commission Newsletter

Nevada County Transportation Commission
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THE TRUCKEE BYPASS OPENS TO TRAFFIC

On October 24, 2002 a formal ribbon cutting ceremony was held to celebrate the opening to traffic of the Truckee Bypass on State Highway 267. Typically there is little fanfare when Caltrans opens a project, but Caltrans District 3 Director Jody Lonergan joined with officials and citizens of the Town of Truckee to commemorate this long awaited day – 20 years later. The \$33.5 million project became a reality in August of 1999 when construction began, after 17 years of negotiating and planning to obtain approval and funding. The bypass was built to help alleviate traffic congestion and delays in the downtown Truckee area. With SR 267 providing major access to



Ribbon cutting ceremony carried out by Truckee Vice Mayor Ted Owens, former Nevada County Supervisor Pat Sutton, Nevada County Supervisor Barbara Green, Caltrans District 3 Director Jody Lonergan, and Truckee Councilman/NCTC Commissioner Josh Susman. The Truckee High School Wolverine marching band played at the event.

downtown Truckee, I-80, the hospital, the airport, Sierra Estates, Kings Beach, and various ski resorts in the area, planning an alternate route was the only apparent option to keep traffic flowing. But where would Nevada County get the money for such a large construction project?

In 1983 the California Transportation Commission (CTC) funded a special study of the downtown Truckee area for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The Nevada County Board of Supervisors and the Nevada County Transportation Commission supported their finding and the bypass project was listed as #1 priority in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). Environmental studies began in May of 1985. Numerous public workshops were held showing the bridge location and visual impacts to the region. The CTC adopted the Route Adoption-Bypass Corridor project May 23, 1991 and funding was approved in the 1992 STIP for \$19 million in the 1997/98 fiscal year. The project was environmentally cleared and approved by the Federal Highway Administration July 24, 1992. Right-of-way acquisition and final project design was scheduled for August 1992 through May 1997 with a projected date to begin construction in the spring of 1998.

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Upcoming NCTC Meetings

The next two meetings of the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) are scheduled as follows: **Wednesday, DECEMBER 18, 2002 at 8:30 a.m., in the Nevada County Supervisors Chambers**, 950 Maidu Avenue, Nevada City, CA; and **Wednesday, JANUARY 15, 2003 at 8:30 a.m., in the Grass Valley City Council Chambers**, 125 East Main Street, Grass Valley, CA.



BRUNSWICK LANDSCAPE PROJECT PROGRESSING

Dedicated volunteers have made the Brunswick landscape project a success. Through the coordinating efforts of retired Caltrans Landscape Architect Tom O'Donnell, Nancy Lockwood of the Nevada County Master Gardeners, Ann Marie Robinson, Caltrans District 3 Liaison for Nevada County, and Dan Landon, Executive Director of the Nevada County Transportation Commission, other citizens have come forward to volunteer their time to plan and now groom and plant seedlings in the Brunswick basin along SR 49.

On Saturday, October 26, fifteen volunteers from the Sierra Grape Growers Association came together, under the lead of Curtis Peterson. They spread 76 cubic yards of mulch donated by Caltrans through the

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View of downtown Truckee from the new Bypass

per day.” The trains were noted to cause so much traffic congestion, emergency vehicles were actually blocked from leaving the downtown Truckee Fire Station. Dan Landon, Executive Director of the NCTC, stated in a letter dated February 29, 1996 to Elaine Kaiser of the Surface Transportation Board in Washington, D.C., “Each time a train moves through the town, auto traffic comes to a gridlock. During peak times, traffic queues extend from the train tracks one to two miles south into the Martis Valley.”

*Construction of the bypass was done in six-month intervals between May and November. In addition to new alignment for SR 89 and 267 and various local street improvements, the project included a change in vertical alignment and rehabilitation of I-80 to accommodate the new interchange. The bridge is a 1,500 foot span that extends over the Truckee River, Glenshire Drive, and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, and is believed to be a strong contender for a Caltrans “Excellence in Transportation” award next year due in part to the focus on preserving the fragile environment surrounding the bypass.

The project posed challenges when the job shut down each fall and it had to be winterized against the harsh elements of the High Sierras. Any earth that had been disturbed was stabilized, and runoff contained, to insure protection of the pristine waters and wildlife of the Truckee River. Groups such as the California Department of Fish and Game, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service kept close scrutiny of the construction work. The final project contains a number of settlement basins to retain silt and protect the river waters.

Reinforcing bar on all of the structures were coated with epoxy to forestall corrosion from de-icing salt. A more durable road surface was required due to Sierra winters so the budget was increased to change the surface to Portland cement concrete. The bridge railings contain a longitudinal set of pipes that will eventually become an element of a system to spray de-icing chemicals onto the bridge deck when weather conditions warrant. The fencing that is about mid-span on the bridge protects the railroad tracks below from any falling debris.

We commend the individuals and groups who worked hard over the years to make the dream of a Truckee Bypass a reality.

INTERESTING ASIDE – The Town of Truckee came into existence when the Central Pacific Railroad surveyed the route across the pass in 1863-64. It was called Coburn’s Station for the owner of the saloon. After a fire in 1868 the station was renamed after the river. The river was named for a Paiute Indian leader who made himself known to immigrants crossing the Humboldt desert as early as 1843. Eyewitnesses told of a colorful individual, who took full advantage of dramatic pantomime, diagrams drawn on the ground, and a limited but effective English vocabulary to help direct them westward. It is said the Indian resembled a contemporary French adventurer by the name of “Truckee”. Colonel John Charles Fremont of the United States Army was indebted to Truckee in 1846 when he guided them across the Sierra Nevada Mountains and joined his command for the campaign that greatly aided in the U.S. takeover of California. Truckee was also designated “Captain” by white men, in recognition of his leadership position among his people. He commanded Company H under Fremont, which was made up mostly of Indians from various tribes. After the campaign Truckee went to his central Nevada home, gathered some of his kin and led them over the summit into the Santa Cruz Valley, where some remained for two or three generations. The old leader returned to the Nevada desert where he continued to advise the growing number of immigrants of the best route to California. Often times he warned parties away from the Truckee River route when conditions warranted. Truckee’s granddaughter, Sarah Winnemucca, was among those who called him “Captain Truckee” until his death in 1860. The cross at his gravesite read: “Here lies Captain Truckee, the faithful guide and true friend of the white man.”

*Portions of this text describing the bridge was taken from the July/August 2002 *Caltrans Journal* article on the Truckee Bypass.

In the meantime traffic congestion and safety issues in downtown Truckee increased as the population and recreational traffic grew. In 1995 a proposed merger of two rail companies intensified the situation. The Nevada County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in December 1995 “urging the California Transportation Commission to prioritize funding and immediate construction of the SR 267 bypass project”. Breeze Cross, a Truckee Councilmember when writing to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) in February of 1996, reminded the CTC they recognized the need for the bypass over ten years earlier when it was first listed on the STIP, and all of the significant reasons that caused it to be initially listed had clearly gotten worse over the last 10 years – without any regard for possible railroad merger. An excerpt from a memorandum dated February 22, 1996 from LSC Transportation Planners stated, “At present, approximately 14 trains per day pass through [downtown] Truckee. With the proposed merger [of the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific Railways], this number is expected to double, and could potentially rise to 36 trains



CA Dept. of Fish and Game conducting a special fish population survey on the Truckee River near the Bypass on opening day

efforts of Caltrans Maintenance staff members Rusty Grout and Butch Gifford. Prior to this workday, Curtis attended a mandatory safety meeting at Caltrans and that morning showed a safety video in the Bank of America parking lot to volunteers. Safety procedures were discussed and safety equipment issued. Ann Marie provided donuts and a helping hand, while Tom O’Donnell reviewed with the volunteers sketches of the planting areas and borders he previously defined in chalk. The workers split up into two groups to work on both sides of the freeway. After about one hour of mulch spreading, with a substantial volume still left to move, one member went home to get his tractor. Sore backs and shoulders were kept to a minimum and mulch spreading was completed by 1:00 p.m.

On December 7th the Sierra Grape Growers Association will go back to the Brunswick Basin to plant 600 drought resistant seedlings they generously donated. The plan that day will be to have a safety review of procedures, issue additional safety equipment, and then go to the mulch area for a planting demonstration from Tom O’Donnell and Nancy Lockwood before planting begins. The Grape Growers will return early spring or summer to do additional irrigation work to insure a successful planting project.

A sincere thank you is extended to all the workers who gave of their time to create this eye-pleasing landscape at Brunswick.



INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS (ITS) STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT PLAN

The Nevada County Transportation Commission recently participated in a Tahoe Gateway four-county planning effort (between El Dorado, Placer, Sierra and Nevada Counties), led by the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency, to coordinate the future deployment of compatible Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). You are probably asking yourself, what is ITS? It is the application of technology to help solve transportation problems and it evolved to provide a new alternative for improving the efficiency of the transportation network. Deployment of ITS projects can improve travel times, reduce congestion and delay, provide real time information, and provide for safer travel. It focuses on saving lives, time, and money. It is about advanced technology focusing on meeting specific needs, and how to do more with less by making more efficient our present transportation network. It enhances signals systems and travel through urbanized areas; it is road and weather sensing and other vehicle detection devices; it is helping the commercial vehicle industry become more efficient; it is a lot about traveler information through a variety of means; it is about integration by bringing all of that together in one place so the transportation infrastructure can be managed in a more effective way. The concept is, if we get better information to travelers, they could change their route or travel plans. If enough people do that, the whole transportation system is more efficient and safer. This deployment plan provides a new set of solutions to meet transportation challenges. To obtain Federal Highway funds to deploy intelligent transportation systems, a prerequisite is to have an ITS plan established. The plan also helps Caltrans get projects funded through state funds.

The ITS Committee worked together for two years and was made up of individuals from Caltrans, Nevada Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, all the county planning agencies, CHP, transit agencies, National Weather Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the commercial vehicle industry. The committee came up with 54 projects, 9 of which are in Nevada County. The projects focus primarily in the traveler information area to enhance travel on I-80, ease traffic congestion in Truckee, ease commute congestion, and coordinate transit agency linkages, to improve traffic safety and winter traffic management. Of the 54 projects, 32 are considered “high urgency” to be accomplished in zero to five years. Our county’s projects will be reviewed by the Commission and by staff to integrate and incorporate into the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Dan Landon, Executive Director of the NCTC, stated the current TEA 21 bill encourages some of that federal money be used for deployment of advanced technology solutions. Staff will be working with the ITS Committee to see how to identify and prioritize projects, and obtain the funding necessary to implement them.

